

THE COST OF CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

-----, 2009 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The following is by the late William J. McCarrell:

"The most effective testimony against apostasy is separation from it"

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Abel contended at the cost of his life. Elijah was pursued, fed by ravens, and forced to share the widow's meager fare while his life hung in balance because he contended for God's truth versus Baalism. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was imprisoned and suffered attempts upon his life through starvation, being cast into a pit of quicksand, and in other ways because he contended for the faith. Contending caused Daniel's three companions to be cast into the burning fiery furnace. Daniel was placed in the lions' den for the same reason.

Jesus Christ was crucified, not by common people who heard Him gladly, neither by publicans, nor the woman out of whom he cast seven demons, nor by the thief saved on Golgotha, but by the unsaved, apostate religious leaders of His day because He was God's truth (John 14:6) and contended for it by teaching, ministry and life. The majority of the apostles paid for their contending by martyrdom, Stephen by being stoned to death (Acts 7:54- 60), and the Apostle John by being exiled on the Isle of Patmos. Had they not contended for God's revealed truth, their experience would have been far different.

The price the Apostle Paul paid was to be misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, threatened with continuous riots, starvation, imprisonments, receiving of hundreds of stripes, beatings with rods, being stoned, perils on every hand, attempts upon his life, being made the offscouring of society, and martyrdom by beheading. He suffered the loss of all things because he contended earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

The price of contending is paid in proportion to one's separation from apostasy. Spurgeon said, "The most effective testimony against apostasy is separation from it." This is the Bible method in contending for the faith.

THE PRICE WE WILL BE FORCED TO PAY

Paying the price of contending will call for reconciliation to:

- 1) Sacrificing popularity
- 2) Willingness to be unpopular
- 3) Willingness to be misunderstood, misrepresented, wrongly accused, slandered
- 4) Willingness to be criticized, belittled, and mocked
- 5) Willingness to be classed as backward, lacking in education and learning
- 6) Loss of prestige, pulpit and platform opportunities
- 7) Possible sacrifice of pastoring a church
- 8) Being branded as non-cooperative, even a trouble-maker
- 9) Sacrifice of advancement in pastoral position and otherwise
- 10) Sacrifice of income and material
- 11) Sacrifice of pension, insurance, material security
- 12) Severance of fellowship with lifelong friends, especially in the religious realm
- 13) Testing in maintaining a Christ-honoring spirit of patience, prayer and spiritual love toward Christians who are biblically uninformed or dull, cold, compromising, even backslidden, in their Christian state, also with apostates and subtle sinful apostate opposition
- 14) Testing as to patiently waiting for God to honor biblical witnessing, living and service
- 15) Determination to obey God's Word though all others disobey, to be true to Christ whether one's stand is ever justified before mankind or not
- 16) Trusting the outcome to the faithfulness of a faithful God
- 17) Witnessing, living and serving in the light of Christ's coming Bema-seat judgment for works (I Cor. 3:11-15)
- 18) Practicing continually, by God's grace, the courage of Athanasius who, while contending for the Deity of Christ and the Trinity of the Godhead through resisting the Arian Unitarian error of early Christian centuries, refused to compromise though appealed to do so by Emperor Theodosius Theodosius, in bitterness of spirit, said, "Do you not realize that all the world is against you?" Athanasius, realizing that the foundations of Christianity were at stake in the

controversy concerning Bible truth and the Christian faith, replied to the Emperor, "Then I am against all the world.")

19) A contending price, which will be continuous vigilance; 20) Such Bible study as to enable one to know God's truth, discern error, and expose subtle, destructive teachings (Such a stand will demand a consistent, sacrificial life in order to strengthen the message)

A most effective means of counteracting apostasy and contending for the faith is an exemplary life, also the building of a constructive Christian work. Opposition cannot meet nor overcome such procedure. Such procedure is impossible apart from an unselfish spirit, service not motivated by income, personal gain, nor future security. Such contending demands service saturated with prayer, teaching of God's Word, witnessing for Christ, and bulwarked by Holy-Spirit controlled life and service. These were the God- given and enabled methods of the Church in the Book of Acts. They will never be improved upon.

The greatest Christian servant from among mankind, the Apostle Paul, when facing earthly departure, said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (II Timothy 4:7). May every saved one realize that such testimony is impossible apart from contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). May they, by appropriating Christ's all-sufficient grace (II Corinthians 12:9), so live and serve their Savior as to merit such testimony.

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